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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE //
Washington 25, D. C. //

April 8, 1957

To: Members, Management Improvement Committee, U.S.D.A.
From: Ralph S. Roberts, Administrative Assistant Secretary
Subject: Report on National Training Laboratories' Management Work Conference

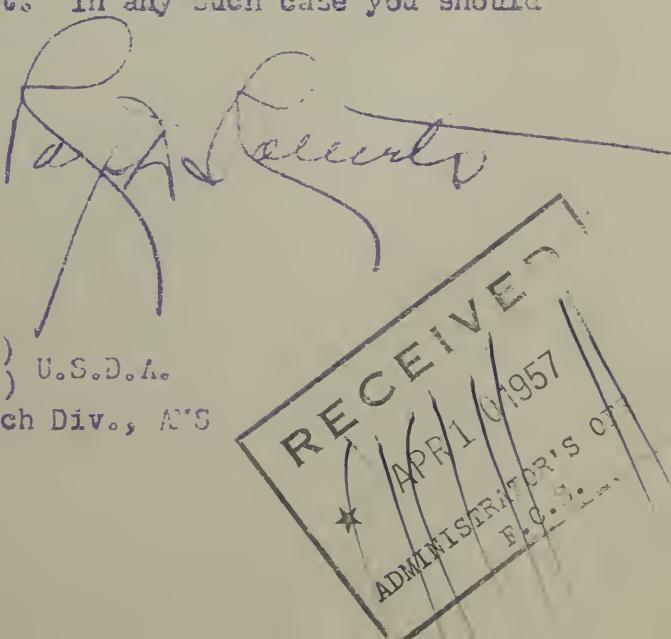
At my request, Mr. Henry G. Herrell, Assistant Administrator for Management of the Agricultural Marketing Service, recently attended a two-week management work conference conducted by the National Training Laboratories. The purpose of the conference was to increase leadership skills. The purpose of Mr. Herrell's attendance was to evaluate the methods and techniques used in the conference to assist in determining their usefulness in connection with in-service executive development training programs in government. This was in accordance with a plan developed between the Civil Service Commission and the NTL.

Mr. Herrell has prepared a written report of his reactions to the conference, which placed considerable emphasis on the "human dimension" in our everyday responsibilities as "managers" or "supervisors." A copy of the report is attached. He has also made oral reports (with illustrations) to a number of supervisory groups¹ within the Department.

Some of the methods used in this conference are relatively new, and are being widely adopted by industrial, educational, and other groups. It may be helpful to selected members of your staff if they could have the opportunity to hear Mr. Herrell's oral discussion. I heard it recently and found it interesting, informative, and stimulating. In case there is such interest, Mr. Herrell has indicated a willingness to meet with your people on this subject. In any such case you should contact him.

Attachment

- 1/ Administrator's Staff, AMS
Director's Supervisory Staff, B&F
Director's Supervisory Staff, OI
Organization and Methods Conference) U.S.D.A.
Training Officers' Seminar)
Field Supervisors, Marketing Research Div., AMS



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REPORT ON

MANAGEMENT WORK CONFERENCE

CONDUCTED BY THE NATIONAL TRAINING LABORATORIES

AT ARDEN HOUSE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S HARRIMAN CAMPUS

January 28, 1957 to February 8, 1957 //

By

HENRY G. HERRELL
ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR MANAGEMENT
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

MANAGEMENT WORK CONFERENCE
1957

I INTRODUCTION

- Purpose: To increase self-awareness, leadership skills, and understanding of group relationships.^{1/}
- Time: Two weeks in the winter - work scheduled on 12 of 13 days and on 8 evenings. (Some evening meetings were optional - but practically everyone attended.)
- Place: Arden House, a "mansion on a mountain-top," and further isolated at this time by snow and ice.
- Plan: Varied - lectures, panels, open forums, skill practices, labs, small training (T) groups, etc. Role-playing (with and without alter ego), demonstrations, movies, and other visuals.
- Staff: Social scientists, university professors, industrial executives, psychologists, authors, and others; all keen-minded, very much alive, flexible in approach, and the kind of people whose association you "enjoyed" at breakfast, lunch, dinner, in lounges, bowling alleys, etc., where they purposely made themselves available to discuss with the conferees any topic the conferees might choose within the conference framework.
- Conferees: Approximately 70 (4 of whom were women), corporation presidents, top administrators and other line and staff executives, representing industry, education, public utilities, service organizations, and government.

II CONFERENCE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

- A Lectures on Research in the Field of Human Relations. About three one-hour lectures per day were given (with illustrations and hand-out materials) on the results of research in the field of human relations by outstanding social scientists in that field. Some of the subjects discussed were:

"Findings of Research on Management and Leadership" --
by Rensis Likert, Director, Institute for Social Research,
University of Michigan

"Participation as a Process" -- by Rensis Likert

^{1/} At the request of Mr. Ralph S. Roberts, Administrative Assistant Secretary of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, I attended this conference to observe the techniques and methods employed by the National Training Laboratories, and to analyze and evaluate their usefulness for in-service training purposes in the Department of Agriculture.

"Organizations Grow Through Educational Change" —

by Gordon L. Lippitt, Program Director, National Training Laboratories

"Leadership Styles and Behavior" —

by Robert R. Blake, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Texas

"The Conception of Feedback" —

by Murray Horwitz, Professor, Graduate Department of Psychology, Research Center for Human Relations, New York University

"The Decision-Making Process" —

by Kenneth D. Benne, Director, Human Relations Center, Boston University

"Significance of Role in Organizational Behavior" —

by Douglas McGregor, School of Industrial Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"Effect of Organization on Human Behavior" —

by Chris Argyris, Associate Professor, Industrial Administration, Yale University

Informal observations by a corporation president on results of introducing and merging some human relations research findings with "Scientific Management Techniques" into the operation of a going concern —

by Robert Hood, President, Ansul Chemical Corporation

B

"Laboratories" in Organizational Behavior. To set the stage for the entire conference (after an orientation discussion on the preceding Sunday evening), the first full day was designed so as to involve personally every conference participant in a project set up not only to provide experience in organizational relations, but also to provide the participants with immediate live data which they could review and analyze throughout the remainder of the conference.

In this (and several successive "laboratories" of this type) conferees were assigned organizational roles in hypothetical organizations or situations, with leadership and/or staff responsibilities causing immediate personal involvement, with opportunities (1) to influence or be influenced by others in a group decision-making process, and at the same time (2) to analyze, observe, and report not only their reactions to overt actions of participants, but also to question behind-the-scene motivations of such participants.

Briefly, the problem involved in the first day's "lab" was that of a small manufacturing company in a small town in which a proposed change in vacation policy had come up for decision. Every participant was assigned a specific role in each of the five divisions of the company and functioned within the formal structure of the organization, both in formal sessions and in informal groups (resembling coffee-break groups or car pool associations). Facts determined and conclusions arrived at through these hypothetical functions were brought to a head in an open meeting of the board of directors, at which time the final decision was reached. Following this, each departmental group analyzed its own activities internally and in relation to other groups, using reports prepared by group "observers." More emphasis was given in the entire process to HOW the decisions were made than to WHAT the decisions were. Finally the learnings and questions emerging from the separate groups were referred to the entire group for discussion and analysis.

- C "Laboratories" in Small-group Behavior. Activities under this heading also immediately involved the participants. The primary aim of these laboratories was to point up responsibilities of each individual in a group activity for contributions toward setting goals, determining methods of reaching goals, maintaining the cohesiveness of the group, and ultimately aiding the group to reach the best decisions.
- Such exercises as the "Hidden Agenda" sharpened participants' focus on unstated motivations of individuals in the process; e.g., was participant No. 1 actually trying to further the group's objective or simply to impress participant No. 2, the father of his best girl. (It was this type of exercise that role-playing combined with alter egos of the participants revealing their hidden motives was very effectively used.)

- D Training (T) Groups. What happened in these "sessions" was the very heart and soul of the conference. For two hours every day of the conference (except the first day and Saturday), the conferees met in assigned groups of approximately 15, including a staff advisor and an observer.

These meetings had no leader, no agenda, and were totally without structure; i.e., the leadership, work objectives, methods, goals, topics for discussion, etc., were left totally to the group.

Everyone was on an equal footing—status-wise—with everyone else. Almost everyone, being a "man of action" back home, was anxious to do something (almost anything), so as not to "waste time." Hence many tried to "get the floor" with "Why are we here anyway?" questions, or to put some plan of action across—only to be met with objection, rejection, or total lack of recognition.

Only minutes of the first session passed before almost everyone (by later admission) was wondering why it was so difficult to "get across" to this group and become a functioning member of it. This very soon was followed by feelings of WHY can Joe get their attention even for a few minutes? HOW does HE do it? There was little concern about WHAT Joe wanted to do - but HOW he was doing it became intensely important.

It was in these T groups that a revealing, sincere, frank, and free-for-all effort was made by the participants to learn how to become more effective in group activities, how first to be "accepted" and then present their ideas in an acceptable way. Social amenities were cast aside - everyone became a self-appointed observer primarily to profit personally by doing what other participants had done well. Because the climate was "right," there was no hesitancy in voicing criticism. Constructive criticism was earnestly sought by all.

In the early sessions the members (presumably because of tradition) seemed to be more task-oriented (i.e., interested in developing objectives and methods of proceedings) than in establishing and maintaining a working group (i.e., drawing on the full resources of the group, seeking to bring every member into the activity, reconciling different points of view, etc.).

It soon became apparent, however, that everyone realized he must first be "accepted" and contribute to others' acceptance before the group could do much about other matters.

Obviously from this discussion it may readily be seen that the T group purpose was mostly "To see ourselves as others see us" -- or, stated in another way --

To help us gain (a) a greater sensitivity towards behavior of other individuals and ourselves, and (b) a greater understanding of groups and what makes them operate effectively.

- E Individual Decision-Making Process. The "In-Basket Exercise" consisted of a set of written materials simulating papers, lists, documents, reports, and memorandums found in a typical "In" basket of an individual in a specified job, requiring each conferee to make individual decisions on the items in the basket. In an oral briefing the conferees were told to examine ways in which prior practice in group problem-solving affected their handling of problems presented in the packet. This exercise, given during the second week of the conference, also afforded experience with problems which, although not necessarily related to group activity, were related to management.

After each conferee had been given one hour to examine materials in the packet and note his decisions on action to be taken, the conferees met in small groups of approximately 15, considered the various answers suggested, then discussed possible "best" decisions in light of experience and resources of the total group.

III EVALUATION

A General. The National Training Laboratories' announcement of this conference stated management's key problem to be "Getting work done effectively through people." Because of the personal involvement that the conference from its very inception so effectively achieved, and the direct and somewhat astounding impact upon the individual, this experience is exceedingly difficult to evaluate in total. However, it would seem necessary to appraise its effects from two points of view--(1) the effect on or change in the individual, and (2) possible use of this type of conference in governmental training. These will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

B Conference Effects on Participants (primarily from the T group experience). The "normal" activities of an individual such as those involved in becoming an adult and acquiring an education, making a living, raising a family, participating in community, civic or religious activities, etc., do not provide the opportunities "to see yourself as others see you," as were provided in the National Training Laboratories' Management Work Conference.

This "close-up" of the real, transparent "you" as seen and very frankly reported on by others who have no axe to grind (except perhaps the hope that you will be as honest with them in helping them to see their own needs for improvement), requires quite a period for absorption--perhaps even a lifetime. It would, therefore, seem sufficient to say that one who has such an "exposure" should in some measure be able to:

- 1 Increase his awareness of how he, as an individual, behaves in groups and how his behavior affects others;
- 2 Improve his sensitivity to the interpersonal factors in work situations;
- 3 Increase his understanding and skill in diagnosing the factors that affect the productivity of the groups;
- 4 Increase his skill in performing the leadership and/or other membership functions needed in a work group.

This conference did much to help the participant at least to see the values which Ken Benne stated in the orientation session, as follows:

"It is relatively easy to state the values which we must achieve as mature persons and as organizational men. I must be at one and the same time:

A good subordinate -
loyal but not a yes man -
respectful but creative;

A good superior -
stimulating but not driving -
fair but firm -
decisive but flexible;

A good colleague -
loyal but not a conspirator -
helpful but not over-demanding -
supportive but not overprotective."

Although references were not made during the conference to this catalog of what may appear to be conflicting interests or "oppositions," the absolute need for integrating them within the individual, while the individual maintains his own integrity, was made clear at every turn.

C Conference Evaluation for Government Use.

1 Re Partial Adoption of Conference Objectives and Methods.
Many techniques of the conference are now a part of or can be readily introduced to regular training activities of the Government. It is to be noted, however, that the one big difference between the conventional training conference and this one at Arden House (if considered in its entirety), was the high degree of "personal involvement" caused in each participant from the very beginning and held throughout the meeting.

This matter of becoming personally involved could not be avoided. The natural result was a high degree of participation which, in this setting, leads one quickly to recognize those changes in his behavior which are most important to his increased effectiveness in dealing with others.

It is very doubtful that anything but fragmentary values would accrue from adapting "parts" or "phases" of this conference to "established" training mechanisms.

2 Re Use of Entire Conference Methods and Content for Government Supervisors. Management work conferences, duplicating as nearly as possible the conference at Arden House, should be exceedingly helpful to "managers" in Government on an in-service

training basis. To be most effective, however, the individuals selected for any one meeting should be from different departments or agencies so that they will not be so much aware of differences in rank or status, thus to be more objective.

It is also believed this training should be made available first to those career individuals in the topmost positions of Government (with years yet to serve, of course), who can be most influential in improving the governmental process, and in making the public service more attractive to capable individuals.

It is believed the two-week period is of ideal duration—with one week being too brief to get full value and three weeks being unnecessary.

(It may be interesting to note that the 14 members of one T group were asked in a group on the last day of the conference for their opinions of the value of such a conference for selected top-level Government supervisors; whether they thought one week would be enough; whether they thought two weeks would be worth the price they as taxpayers would have to pay for it, etc. There was much discussion of values they could see accruing from such training and they were unanimous in agreeing that two weeks duration was the ideal period to devote to it.)

3 Re Value of Reporting and Discussing Methods and Techniques Used in This Conference Within the General Framework of Other Supervisory Training Conferences. Since returning from the conference there have been several opportunities for reporting to groups of supervisory personnel the methods and techniques used by the National Training Laboratories in helping the participants to become more aware of the human behavioral aspects of being a good supervisor, a good subordinate, and a good colleague. Because of the nature of the response from the groups to which these oral reports have been made, it is believed that two or three hours could be used to distinct advantage within the framework of any over-all supervisory training program, to inform the participants of the National Training Laboratories' approach to this problem. If specific incidents, experiences, and illustrations of the down-to-earth happenings at the conference, particularly within the T groups, are related in an interesting manner, it is believed that the time spent will be well worth while.

D By-Product Values.

1 Knowing more of human relations research results and how to keep fairly current with their application (through established mailing lists, etc.) should be generally helpful. In this field,



